

Overview of PRTH 602
The Church and its Ministry
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I. Definition of the Church

- A. Invisible – the company of the elect who are called by the Holy Spirit
- B. Visible – the community of those who profess the true faith together with their children (organism & institution).

II. Marks and Attributes of the Church

A. Marks

- 1. The pure doctrine of the gospel is preached;
- 2. The pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ;
- 3. Church discipline is exercised.

B. Attributes:

- 1. One (unity) – There is one true church united by one faith and oriented to one Lord. Christ is at the center and the church is drawn together as one.
- 2. Holy – The church is based on its consecration by God to be a vessel for his honor. It is set apart and being purified.
- 3. Catholic – The universal church is not limited, exclusive, or localized. The church wants to expand and broaden its borders from its center (Christ).

Dulles identifies four types of catholicity:

- a) In height where it communes with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- b) In breadth which means it is not localized;
- c) In length which means it spans the ages and reaches into the eschatological future;
- d) In depth which means it is rooted in the creation order.
- 4. Apostolic – The church is founded on apostolic witnesses. Its mission is to proclaim the gospel and its office are Christ's representatives to lead.

III. Sacraments

A. Definition: a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ is represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and they, in turn, express their faith and obedience to God. They seal our participation in the decisive and historical event of Christ's death and resurrection. The focus is on what God has done in Christ, and not our actions.

ORAL COMP. QUESTION: *Ex opere operate* means that the sacraments work grace in us in and of themselves.

B. Baptism:

- 1. Baptism is like *branding* in which God claims us as his own and puts his mark on us.
- 2. Baptism is like a *bath* in which water symbolizes that God is in our lives with a cleansing agent.
- 3. Baptism is like a *burial* in which we are buried with Christ and rise to a new life.

C. The Lord's Supper: It is not just a memorial because Christ is spiritually present. It is a means of grace through which we are fed with spiritual bread and wine (Calvin).

1. Consubstantiation (Luther): Keeps the physical presence of Christ in the sacrament because it is everywhere (on, under, around) but not in the elements.
2. Memorial (Zwingli): Christ is not in the elements. It is a memorial so anything could be used for the elements. Christ's presence is denied at the sacrament.
3. Transubstantiation (Roman Catholic): The elements are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This changes the language of *one* sacrifice.
4. Calvin's View: Christ is spiritually present in the Lord's Supper.

IV. Four Aspects of Ministry

- A. It must always be Christ centered;
- B. It must be ecclesiastical: it is not a family or a business;
- C. It must be a corporate body: gifts must be used to build up the body;
- D. It must be relational in character: people should be loved in the same way Christ loves the church.

V. Kingdom, Covenant, Church

- A. Kingdom is God's redemptive activity in creation.
- B. Covenant is the instrument whereby the King accomplishes his redemptive activity in history.
- C. Church is the fruit of the covenant; the agent of his coming kingdom; the means through which the mission of God is accomplished.

VI. Christian & Reformed Ecclesiological Categories:

- A. *congregation fidelium* – Christological focus; the believing community; the body of Christ; focus is on what we do.
- B. *communio sanctorum* – redemptive/historical focus; the chosen; the people of God; focus is on what God does.
- C. *church militant* – the church on earth which has a task.
- D. *church triumphant* – the church in heaven made up of those who have died.
- E. Calvin – the nurturing mother of believers; the people of God; the chosen; the new creation; the fellowship of faith; the body of Christ; the community of Christ's people.

VII. Ordination: There is a sense of Christ-representation. It is not the only means by which the church is connected to Christ but it is a unique representation.

- A. The essential components of ordination are:
 1. Call
 2. Gifts
 3. Need
- B. Calvin's position on ordination is based on Ephesians 4:

